DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 248 965 PS 014 579

AUTHOR Rave, Elizabeth J.; Hannah, Gregory L.
TITLE Effects of Gender on Toddler Behavior Description.
PUB DATE Apr 84
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association (Greeley, CO, April 25-28, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; Behavior; Blacks; Demography; *Ethnicity; *Ethnic Stereotypes; Females; *Labeling (of Persons); Males; Research Problems; Sex Bias; *Sex Differences; *Sex Stereotypes; Toddlers; Whites
IDENTIFIERS Adjective Rating Scale; *Gender Identity

ABSTRACT

White subjects were asked to evaluate toddler behavior after viewing a 14-minute film of a white child and a black child playing spontaneously. Each toddler was presented as both a male and a female to 208 well-educated adult subjects. In Treatment I, the children were called John and Mike; in Treatment II, Jane and Mary; in Treatment III, John and Mary; and in Treatment IV, Jane and Mike. Subjects rated filmed toddler behaviors on a specially designed instrument consisting of 12 adjective pairs placed at opposite ends of a seven-choice Likert-type scale. Thirteen pairs centered on gender, 13 pairs on ethnicity, 10 pairs on both, and 10 pairs on neither. The toddlers were generally seen as significantly different on all variables except "bright-dull" and "handsome-beautiful." On six variables, the gender of the subject made a significant difference in responses. For two variables, the treatment situation made a difference in how the toddlers were perceived. The dependent variable "handsome-beautiful" showed an interaction depending upon whether the toddlers were believed to be male or female. This interaction acted as a rough validity check to demonstrate that the procedure and instrument were sensitive enough to pick up statistically significant differences in viewer perceptions. It could not be ascertained whether the subjects perceived or were reacting to ethnic stereotypes. The need for black subjects was also noted. (Author/RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED248965

Effects of Gender on Toddler Behavior Description

Elizabeth J. Rave

Gregory L. Hannah

Department of Professional Psychology

University of Northern Colorado

Greeley, Colorado 80639

PS 014579

Presented at Rocky Mountain Psychological Association Annual Convention

April 25-28, 1984

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Elizabeth J. Rave
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Running Head: EFFECTS OF GENDER

Abstract

White subjects were asked to evaluate toddler behaviors after viewing a 14-minute film of a White child and a Black child playing spontaneously. Each toddler was presented as both a male and a female in four different treatment conditions to 208 well-educated subjects. A three-factor analysis of variance with repeated measures design was used to statistically examine each of 12 dependent variables. Of the three effects, toddlers, gender, or treatment, the toddlers had the greatest number of significant effects. On six of the 12 attributes (bright-dull, independent-dependent, unpleasant-pleasant, gentle-rough, dirty-clean, and active-passive) gender effects were significant. On five of the same variables (all but bright-dull) toddler effects were also significant, suggesting a link between differential perceptions and the gender of the perceiver. The dependent variable "handsome-beautiful" showed an interaction, depending upon whether the toddlers were believed to be male or female. This interaction acted as a rough validity check to demonstrate that the procedure and instrument were sensitive enough to pick up statistically significant differences in viewer perceptions. It cannot be ascertained whether the subjects perceived or were reacting to ethnic stereotypes. The need for Black subjects was also emphasized.

EFFECTS OF GENDER AND ETHNICITY IN BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION

Behavior is described, evaluated, and judged throughout everyone's lifetime---from hospital nursery through final retirement, from pre-school through graduate school, from job performance through professional activities. Yet exactly the same behavior may be evaluated differently according to variables inherent in both the evaluator and the person being evaluated. This research attempted to investigate the effects of both gender and ethnicity on adult perceptions of behavior.

In their monumental work Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) seemed to conclude that few sex differences actually were supported by research. In fact, the authors suggested that for parents the "probability of a child's behavior being noticed" may be connected in some way to the "probability level the parent unconsciously assigns to it." (p. 345) Using the Meyer and Sobieszek (1972) study to support their speculation, the authors suggested that behaviors are especially noticed if they run counter to sex-role stereotypes. Unger (1979) summarized research dealing with the effects of sex as a stimulus variable and concluded that the sex of the stimulus person affected criteria for mental health, evaluations about the causes of someone's behavior, and perceptions about the value of others. Unger pointed out that illusions about sex differences are held by both females and males. She hypothesized that the "persistent evaluation biases in our society" support "the proposition that there is no such thing as identical male and female behavior" (1091). Unger

(1979; 1980) has also criticized psychological research for focusing on sex differences rather than similarities and for assuming the differences that do occur are the result of sex.

In conclusion, Unger (1979) clarified the distinction between sex and gender:

> The distinction between sex and gender can assist in the generation of research hypotheses that do not assume the former is necessarily the basis for the latter. The use of the term gender makes it less likely that psychological differences between males and females will be considered explicable mainly in terms of physiological differences between them. Those who study the psychology of women are often concerned with the stimulus functions of sex---the fact that the label male or female with no additional information provided greatly alters people's view of the stimulus person described. Gender refers to the traits and behaviors considered characteristic of and appropriate to members of each sexual category. (p. 1093)

The present research focused on sex as a stimulus variable. Specifically, this study looked at whether the same behavior was labeled differently according to both the performer's and respondent's gender. The research also explored differential labeling by performer's ethnicity. In addition, demographic variables, such as age, educational level, and contact with children, were investigated.[1]

Earlier work by Meyer and Sobieszek (1972) had found few differences in descriptions of toddler behavior by adults when the child was labeled either male or female. That study used an adjective check list, showed two 15-minute videotapes of one White child each, and included White subjects only in its sample of 85 adults. Each child was described at times as a girl and at times as a boy.

Methods

Subjects

Subjects generally came from two sources. Community groups in northern Colorado and southern Wyoming were solicited for participation; graduate summer classes at the University of Northern Colorado were also solicited. Subjects in the latter category tended to be temporary students taking courses for recertification while subjects in the former category tended to be service club members. Efforts were made to avoid using undergraduate university classes and subjects still in their teens.

Apparatus

Film. Two 14-month-old toddlers were filmed engaging in spontaneous play. The children, one Black and one White, were closely matched developmentally according to height, weight, walking ability, and motor skills. Forty minutes of black and white film were shot over a 2 1/2-hour period and later edited to 12 minutes. The final version included equal amount of footage of each child individually balanced for activity level, as well as several minutes of both children in parallel play. To minimize the effects of extraneous gender identification, the toddlers were dressed in plain shirts and diapers and went barefoot during the filming. The initials J or M were pinned on the children's shirts and the appropriate letters were superimposed in the film under the appropriate child. A musical sound track was added that was balanced for tempo and activity level of the toddlers.

Instrument. Previous research was searched to find adjective pairs that that been used to describe both gender and ethnic characteristics (Brigham,

1974; Broverman, 1970; Hamilton, 1977; Hurwitz, 1975; Imada, 1979; Koblensky, 1978; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Sagar & Schofield, 1980; Smedley & Bayton, 1978; Smith & Millham, 1979; Stephen & Langolis, 1980). From the literature search, 46 adjective pairs were developed that had been used in previous research. These pairs (13 for gender, 13 for ethnicity, 10 for both, and 10 for neither) were then randomized and submitted to a panel of experts who had experience in issues surrounding gender and ethnic stereotyping. From the experts' ratings, 12 adjective pairs emerged with high consistency. Four pairs (handsome-beautiful, independent-dependent, sharing-selfish, and gentle-rough) seemed to be representative of assumed gender traits; four pairs (slow-fast, bright-dull, busy-lazy, and dirty-clean) seemed to be representative of assumed ethnic characteristics; three pairs (cooperative-competitive, emotional-rational, and active-passive) seemed to be representative of both characteristics; and one pair (unpleasant-pleasant) seemed to be a neutral characteristic, representative of neither.

These 12 pairs were again randomized and placed at either end of a seven-choice Likert-type scale. One side of the page was for Baby J; directly across the page was the scale for Baby M. In addition, the cover page asked subjects to identify their gender, age, occupation, marital status, ethnicity, number of children, and contact with children.

Procedure

The authors showed the film to 323 subjects over a two-month period. The research was described as a children's early personality development project.

Before viewing the film, participants were told its length, the type of questionnaire they would fill out, and the use of the initials J and M to identify the toddlers on the film. The children's names were said twice before showing the film. After viewing the film, the subjects were given the questionnaire and instructions for completing it, and the children's names were said again. In Treatment I the children were called John and Mike; in Treatment II, Jane and Mary; in Treatment III, John and Mary; and in Treatment IV, Jane and Mike.

Results

A three-factor analysis of variance with repeated measures design (Winer, 1971) was used to statistically examine each of the 12 dependent variables. To provide a balanced design, 208 subjects were randomly selected for use in the analysis, resulting in a cell N of 26.

The toddlers were generally seen as significantly (See Table 1.) different on all variables except bright-dull and handsome-beautiful. Specifically the White child was seen as less fast, more cooperative, less dependent, more sharing, more pleasant, more gentle, more clean, and less active than the Black child.

On six variables the gender of the subject made a significant difference in her or his responses. Female subjects saw both children as more bright, more independent, more pleasant, more gentle, more clean, and more active than male subjects did.

For two variables the treatment made a difference in how the toddlers were viewed. Dunn's test was used to determine which treatment means showed

Table 1

Significant Effects of Three-Factor ANOVA with Repeated Measures on Adjective Pairs *

Variable	Source of Variance	df	Mean Squares	F
Slow-fast	Toddlers	1, 200	1.2774	47.57
Cooperative-competitive	Toddlers	1, 200	2.1454	167.80
Bright-dull	Gender	1, 200	1.7050	4.11
Handsome-beautiful	Treatment x Toddlers	3, 200	1.6078	14.96
	Treatment	3, 200	2.8836	5.91
Busy-lazy	Toddlers	1, 200	1.4500	55.52
	Treatment x Gender x Toddlers	3, 200	1.4500	3.78
	Gender	1, 200	2.0085	5.06
Emotional-rational	Toddlers	1, 200	1.3303	45.11
	Treatment x Toddlers	3, 200	1.3303	3.45
Independent-dependent	Toddlers	1, 200	2.2596	45.14
	Gender	1, 200	1.9892	5.59
Sharing-selfish	Toddlers	1, 200	2.3373	117.50
Unpleasant-pleasant	Toddlers	1, 200	1.0782	67.50
	Gender	1, 200	1.7659	13.61
	Treatment	3, 200	1.7659	4.63
Gentle-rough	Toddlers	1, 200	2.3603	85.65
	Gender	1, 200	1.7203	10.33
Dirty-clean	Toddlers	1, 200	0.4817	24.45
	Gender	1, 200	2.8171	7.22
	Treatment	3, 200	2.8171	3.22
Active-passive	Toddlers	1, 200	1.6409	103.65
	Gender	1, 200	2.2336	4.87

* $p < .05$.

NOTE: All nonsignificant effects were omitted.

significant differences. On the unpleasant-pleasant variable the mean for Treatment I (4.88) was different from Treatment II (5.44), t (200) = 3.04, p .05, and Treatment IV (5.51), t (200) = 3.42, p .05. In other words, Baby J was seen as more unpleasant when perceived as a male engaging in play with another male than when Baby J was believed tc be a female. Additionally, the perceived difference was consistent with both male and female respondents. The female respondents did tend to see both children as more pleasant than male respondents did. The dependent variable dirty-clean demonstrated treatment effects with Treatment IV (M = 5.81), t (200) = 3.05, p .05. Both toddlers were seen as more clean when Baby J was believed to be female and Baby M was thought to be male.

The dependent variable handsome-beautiful exhibited an interaction (Treatment X Toddler). The direction of the interaction was contingent upon whether the toddlers were believed to be female or male. The interaction acted as a rough validity check to demonstrate that the procedures and instrument were sufficiently sensitive to reflect statistically significant differences in viewers' perceptions.

A treatment by toddler interaction effect occurred on two variables, handsome-beautiful and emotional-rational. As a result, the toddlers were not seen consistently by the subjects across all treatments. In addition, a treatment by gender by toddler interaction effect confounded how the subjects, by gender, perceived the toddlers across treatments on the busy-lazy variable.

Demographic variables, gender, age, occupation, marital status, ethnicity, number of children, and contact with children, were investigated.

One of them, age, proved significant and was examined with Dunn's Test for differences between treatment levels. Treatment I ($\underline{M}$ = 32.4) was not significantly different from Treatment III ($\underline{M}$ = 33.5) and Treatment II ($\underline{M}$ = 35.7) was no different than Treatment IV ($\underline{M}$ = 36.3). However, there was a difference between I and II, $\underline{t}$ (201) = 5.83, $\underline{p}$ .05, and between III and IV, $\underline{t}$ (201) = 4194, $\underline{p}$ .05.

Discussion

Overall, several unexpected factors may have affected the outcomes in this interim progress report of the research project. Regardless of the efforts made to balance the activity level of the toddlers on the film through editing, individual differences in activity level may still have occurred in the final film version. In addition, the instrument itself may have forced subjects to discriminate between the toddlers' behavior when an adjective check list or some other format might have allowed more flexibility in responses. Finally, by presenting the film themselves, the experimenters may have introduced bias.

The results need to be interpreted with caution due to the disproportionately high educational level of the subjects. It may be posited that the subjects were not naive with respect to research procedures. For example, subjects infrequently asked any questions about the research when given the opportunity after completion of the instrument. Whether the lack of questioning infers that subjects accepted the gender of the toddlers as stated by the experimenters or that they did not want to say anything to potentially contaminate the research is, of course, unknown. One aspect of the study that

White subjects did question periodically was the use of a Black child in the film. Subjectively, it seemed that some subjects were surprised.

Interestingly, however, differential perceptions did occur. The frequent gender differences (6) in perceptions indicate that females and males tended to perceive the toddlers' behavior differently. In addition, for five variables a gender effect and a toddler effect occurred concurrently (with no interaction effect), indicating a link between differential perceptions and the gender of the perceiver. It should be emphasized that these effects occurred across treatments. Various life experiences of females and males may cause them to evaluate certain characteristics in dissimilar ways. Differences, by gender, of rater perception occurred despite whether the toddlers were labeled male or female. Either the toddlers were rated differently because of true individual differences or reactions to ethnic stereotypes affected the outcomes. Further research will be conducted to determine the effect of level of education, possible research sophistication, or reflection of the appropriate social responses of the dominant culture. It is also possible that gender labeling produces very few differences in perceptions of toddler behavior.

It is clear that there is a need for Black and other minority subjects, not only within the scope of this project, but with all human research at large. Presently, the research leaves unanswered the effects of the subjects' ethnicity.

And, finally, a descriptor of behavior alone may not be sufficient to communicate meaning. Other factors may determine the perceptions than the person being described. So far, from our research, the gender of the perceiver plays a role in how toddlers are rated. In other words, the label given may say as much about the "labeller" as the "labelee."

References

Brigham, J. (1974). Views of black and white children concerning the distribution of personality characteristics. Journal of Personality, 42, 145-148.

Broverman, J. K. et al. (1970). Sex role stereotypes and clinical judgments of mental health. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 34, 1-7.

Hamilton, M. L. (1977). Ideal sex roles for children and acceptance of variation from stereotypic sex roles. Adolescence, 12, 89-96.

Hurwitz, D. et al. (1975). A Semantic Differential for facial attributes: The face differential. Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society, 6.

Imada, A. S. & London, M. (1979). Relationship between subjects, scales, and stimuli in research on social perception. Perceptual and Motor Skill, 48, 691-697.

Koblensky, S. G., Grüse, D. F., & Sugawara, A. I. (1978). Sex-role stereotypes and children's memory for story content. Child Development, 49, 451-458.

Maccoby, E. & Jacklin, C. (1974). The Psychology of Sex Differences. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Meyer, J. W. & Sobieszek, B. J. (1972). The effect of a child's sex on adult interpretation of its behavior. Developmental Psychology, 6, 42-48.

Osgood, C. E., Suci, G. J., & Tannenbaum, P. H. (1957). The Measurement of Meaning. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Prescott, P. A. (1978). Sex differences on a measure of self-esteem: theoretical implications. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 132, 67-85.

Sagar, H. A. & Schofield, J. W. (1980). Racial and behavioral cues in black and white children's perceptions of ambiguously aggressive acts. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39, 590-598.

Smedley, J. W. & Boyton, J. A. (1978). Evaluative race-class stereotypes by race and perceived class. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36, 530-535.

Smith, L. E. and Millham, J. (1979). Sex role stereotypes among blacks and whites. Journal of Black Psychology, 6, 1-6.

Snider, J. G. and Osgood, C. E. (1969). Semantic Differential Technique. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Stephen, C. W. and Langolis, J. H. (1980). Physical attractiveness and ethnicity: Implications for stereotyping and social development. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 137, 303-304.

Unger, R. (1979). Toward a redefinition of sex and gender. American Psychologist, 34, 1085-1094.

Unger, R. (1981). Sex as a social reality: Field and laboratory research. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 5, 645-653.

Winer, B. J. (1971). Statistical Principles in Experimental Design (2nd edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Williams, J. E., Bennett, S. M., & Best, D. L. (1975). Awareness and expression of sex stereotypes in young children. Developmental Psychology, 11, 635-642.

Author Notes

The authors are grateful to the University of Northern Colorado Faculty Research and Publication Board for partial funding of the film and to Dr. Beatrice Heimerl for sharing her expertise in statistical analyses.

Footnotes

[1]This report includes an analysis of data from White subjects only. Data are being collected for Black subjects. Results, then, should not be generalized beyond White subjects.